AMARILLO FIELD OFFICE
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Eye on the Panhandle

Helium

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Safety Day 2014 a Resounding Success

On April 9, 2014, the Amarillo Field Office observed the Annual Safety Day at the Cliffside Gas Field. Steve Urbancyzk, Safety and Occupational Health Specialist, and the AmFO Safety Committee planned and coordinated the day.

The Safety Day included a series of videos: Personal Protective Equipment; Bloodborne Pathogens; Fire Extinguisher Training; Emergency Preparedness and Response; Preventing the Spread of Contagious Illness; Working Safely with Hand and Power Tools; and Compressed Air Safety.

In addition, the staff received hands -on fire extinguisher training, as well as a presentation by Krissy Scotten from the National Weather Service. Steve Urbanczyk discussed the Cliffside Gas Field Occupant Evacuation and Fire Prevention Plan.

The day was punctuated by a gourmet lunch overseen by Chef John Hamak, of the four-star restaurant, Chez AmFO. Best burgers in Potter County!

Mike Larson, BLM-NM Occupational Safety and Health Manager, shares his experience with Steve Urbancyzk during Safety Day training.

Phil Whitley (center) assists Dan Fountain (left) and John Hamak (right) as they practice using a fire extinguisher during Safety Day training.

Managing a different kind of fire, John Hamak and Sam Burton cooked burgers and hotdogs for the AmFO Staff during 2014 Safety Day.

Helium Program Links

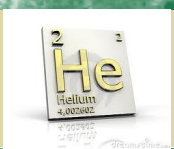
Helium Stewardship Act of 2013:
(http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/toGPObss/http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ40/pdf/PLAW-113publ40.pdf)

Amarillo Field Office:
(http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/fo/Amarillo_Field_Office.html)

Amarillo Helium Operations:
(http://www.blm.gov/nm/helium)

BLM New Mexico State Office
(http://www.blm.gov/nm/st/en.html)

Bureau of Land Management
(www.blm.gov)



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http://www.blm.gov/nm/helium
www.facebook.com/blmnewmexico
www.youtube.com/blmnewmexico
www.flickr.com/photos/blmnewmexico

Public Scoping Meeting Seeks Comments on Helium Sales and Auctions

Robert Jolley and Sam Burton explained the provisions of the Helium Partnership Act of 2013 to industry stakeholders, during a Public Scoping Meeting held on March 6, 2014 at the Amarillo Public Library. The event kicked off the BLM's efforts to request public comments and input on how we will implement the new Act.

On Thursday, March 6, 2014, the BLM Amarillo Field Office held a Public Scoping Meeting regarding the implementation of the Helium Stewardship Act of 2013 (Public Law 113-40). We held the event at the Amarillo Public Library. Robert Jolley, Field Manager, and Sam Burton, Assistant Field Manager, Helium Operations; led the event.

The purpose of the Public Scoping Meeting was to inform public stakeholders on the requirements of the Act, and to solicit input from stakeholders on three key issues: helium tolling between non-refiners and the refiners; pricing methodology that BLM uses to calculate the market price of helium; and when and how to conduct helium auctions.

"We actually worked hard preparing for a shutdown in October. Under the previous legislation, the Federal Helium Program was to terminate on October 7, 2013. The President thought it was important enough that the Stewardship Act was one of five bills he signed into law during the government shutdown period. It's a very important piece of legislation.," Robert Jolley said . "The Act seeks to mitigate a helium shortage by enabling the sale of crude helium from the Federal Helium Reserve, and increases taxpayer returns and stimulates investment in private helium sources by selling crude helium at market-driven prices. It also provides for an orderly transition among four phases, resulting in minimal market disruption to end users."

Phase A includes Allocation Transition for the current fiscal year (FY 2014). BLM offered 400 Million cubic feet for sale in FY 14. Phase B is the Auction Implementation. Congress has mandated that we complete the auctions and FY15 sale and the FY2016 advanced sale by August 1, 2014. In Phase C, we provide continued access for Federal users, and in Phase D, we plan for the disposal of assets. Under the Act, the BLM helium program operation is set to end September 30, 2021.

"It's important to understand that the BLM is one of the leaders in the world for helium production so when we set a market price, it affects worldwide production prices," Robert said. "Market driven prices are important words. We used to charge the price for cost recovery for what it took the government to produce and operate the storage system. But Congress is now asking us to use a market based pricing methodology. That's also consistent with what our own Inspector General asked us to do,"

Sam Burton described a slide that showed the Nitec model (see sidebar for link.) This model has a prediction for how the field will produce, "The model shows the 2021 date in the legislation; we will be completely out of the business and have sold off all the assets by 2021," Sam explained. "At that point, we will have delivered 6.4 billion cubic feet, but there will still be approximately 4 billion still in the ground."

In the Act, Congress also asked the BLM to do a 20-year Strategic Analysis study based on this kind of information, what the federal end users requirements will be, and how the BLM will be able to provide helium to federal end users past 2021. The study is being done by Helium Resources Division of the Amarillo Field Office, and will be prepared in about two years.

Thoughts on Leadership…

"Time waits for no man." You've probably heard that saying. And it's true; time marches on, and it's up to us to keep up with it. We need to be conscious of the clock, or we'll never make any progress toward our goals. But I believe there's more to success than reaching goals. True success comes from significance: doing things that matter...things that last after we're gone.

How do we know if what we're doing really makes a difference? We can't just look at the clock. We need to be conscious of our compass. Here are some thoughts on the Clock and the Compass:

The Clock: The clock is always ticking in this life. Time passes, and we either take advantage of opportunities, or we miss them. So it's important to keep the clock in mind. But it's not the only thing, if you want to live a life of significance.

The Compass: The compass is what we steer life by. It remains constant, and we're wise when we align ourselves with the direction we know we should be going. But just lining up with the compass doesn't get us anywhere if we don't start moving.

The clock equals daily things: what we are doing. The compass equals destiny things: where we are going. The clock deals with appointments and activities. The compass points toward vision, values, and mission. Together the clock and the compass provide us with both motivation and direction. Finding a balance between them means that we're able to compound our efforts and add the most value that we can to our world.

Adapted from John Maxwell, http://www.johnmaxwell.com/blog/connecting-the-clock-and-the-compass.

Amarillo Field Office Celebrates Black History Month

In February 2014, the staff of the Amarillo Field Office gathered to celebrate Black History Month. The special guest was Floyd Anthony, former President of the Amarillo Branch of the NAACP, and Chair of the Amarillo Chapter of the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME). In addition to Mr. Anthony's presentation, staff was provided with a compilation of articles that appeared in the *Amarillo Globe-News*, profiling some of Amarillo's African-American trailblazers.

Mr. Anthony is pictured here with Joe Peterson, Assistant Field Manager for Helium Resources.

TTU Students Visit, Learn at the Cross Bar Ranch

By Adrian Escobar

During the weekend of April 12, 2014, undergraduate students from the Department of Natural Resources Management at Texas Tech University enjoyed a weekend of learning field research techniques on the Cross Bar Management Area. Their degree paths include wildlife biology, range management, and ranch management. Ranch management is a new degree plan that combines the disciplines of wildlife biology, range management, and agriculture into one, as ranchers in Texas and throughout the country continue to integrate hunting into their cattle operations.

This field trip offered Dr. Philip Gibson (pictured at right) an opportunity to demonstrate and to teach his students what actual field research consists of. Texas is 97 percent privately owned, so getting access to land for research purposes is often too difficult. Students learned how to install scent stations, set small mammal traps, seine water for various aquatic species, identify scat samples and animal tracks, and identify the different sounds of the wild at night. As a result of their efforts, students trapped kangaroo rats, pack rats, and 13 line ground squirrels. Scent stations identified raccoons, coyotes, wild pigs, jack rabbits, and one pronghorn. The students seined the Canadian River and netted Arkansas River Shiner, plains minnows, and other unidentified fish species. At night the students heard great-horned owls and coyotes.

The students greatly enjoyed getting hands on experience and expressed their desire to return for more field trips and to volunteer on the Cross Bar. Likewise, the Amarillo Field Office management was excited to see students traverse the prairie and is enthused about seeing more tents filled with students that are eager to learn about and contribute to the conservation of our natural resources. This weekend field trip was one of many more to come.

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Dr. Philip Gibson guided TTU students for a weekend of hands-on experience at the Cross Bar Management Area.

RUSTY GUARDS THE PLANT

By Deward Cawthon

The Amarillo Field Office currently allows Operations to have a plant dog on site. Though many dogs and a few cats have been found either lost or abandoned in the area over the years, we knew right away that Rusty was a keeper. Rusty is very valuable at comforting the operators and other plant personnel during their daily shifts. He makes rounds during the day and at night with the operator. Somehow he catches enough sleep to keep on going. He does get an occasional trip to a Veterinary Clinic or a ride to the Field with one of the Field Personnel.

Rusty has been known to alarm the operator at night. He will just take off running towards the fence barking at something out in the darkness. The hair on his back will go straight up and the operator on duty will wonder whether to continue their checks of the plant or to just call it good and go back inside for safety.

Operations has seen bobcats, coyotes, a mountain lion, foxes and rattle snakes. Every year we run across rattle snakes in and around plant equipment and door ways. Unfortunately, Rusty was bitten by a rattle snake just a short distance from the plant. He did recover well and grew much wiser. He is always on alert for the Operators' and Cliffside employees' sake.

Spotlight on the Cliffside Team: Gas Field and Pipeline Maintenance

By John Litchfield

Before the helium can be delivered to the consumer that facilitates the next advance in celestial exploration or inflates a child's balloon or cools the hospital's MRI magnets or provides the perfectly inert environment for scientific research and the welding of exotic metals, there is much work to be done. Personnel of the BLM's Amarillo Field Office Cliffside Gasfield (NW of Amarillo, TX) and Satanta, KS facilities shoulder these responsibilities of mission accomplishment.

Helium to satisfy 42% of domestic demand and 35% of the world's demand is drawn from wells at the Cliffside Gasfield via 25 miles of gathering pipeline; processed by the Cliffside cryogenic helium enrichment unit; and delivered to privately owned and operated refining plants through 425 miles of transmission pipeline across three states. All aspects and components of this progression must be monitored, measured, maintained, and repaired by Cliffside and Satanta maintenance personnel.

In the warehouse, inventories of parts and materials are meticulously segregated and arranged by categories, thereby enabling easy location and distribution. Demands must be anticipated and supplies procured to ensure uninterrupted day-to-day facility functions. The **Warehouseman** ensures this order.

Electronic Industrial Control Mechanics are stationed at both Cliffside and Satanta. Their proficiency is consistent among the varied measure and control devices in use at Cliffside, Satanta, and the privately owned process plants along the pipeline, and contributes significantly to the accurate monitoring and auditing of customer accounts.

Electrician, Welder, Mechanic, and **Instrument Mechanic**, all craftsmen in their trade, provide the expertise to plan, design, fabricate, install, maintain, and repair the varied and sophisticated electrical, electronic, and mechanized systems, equipment, and pipelines.

The **Heavy Equipment Operator** is skilled in the operation of all earth moving equipment. He further ensures the procedural and site safety of all excavations for the installation or repair of underground facilities.

The **Helium Plant Helpers** provide invaluable support for the trade positions to facilitate task accomplishment. They maintain and repair buildings, vehicles, and grounds; assist in the administration of service contracts; and stand witness to private excavations within close proximity of AmFO pipelines to safeguard its integrity.

Warehouseman Larry Wilson

All maintenance personnel offer knowledgeable, insightful recommendations and work well either independently or as a member of a team. Their conscientious attitude ensures routine tasks and specific job assignments are consistently completed in a timely manner.

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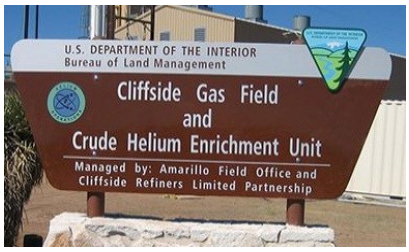
Welder Don Eppard

Spotlight on the Cliffside Team: Helium Plant Operators



By Deward Cawthon

What does it mean to be a Helium Plant Operator? An operator works 12 hour shifts either day or night 365 days a year, usually alone. The Operator is on call 24/7. Operators can and normally miss a number of family activities such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, sporting events, birthday parties, etc. Operators also get more than a fair share of overtime hours. Operators do appreciate the Overtime for the most part, but it can be a bit taxing at time. That be said, being a Helium Plant Operator is a very rare and unique position to have.

Operators' daily duties consist of monitoring the helium production equipment by watching digital control system (DCS) computers and trend chart computers. They respond to critical and operational alarms. They make numerous rounds throughout the plant areas depending on what is happening at the time. While making rounds they are observing for any unusual noises, vibration, gas and liquid leaks, differential pressures changes across filters, oil levels, and proper purges. They maintain clean equipment and buildings. They also control site access through monitoring and operatng perimeter gates and security cameras. They also perform light maintenance work such as changing out equipment filter elements and repairing any number of chemical or gas leaks. The work requires them to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hearing protection, flame retardant clothes, safety glasses, hard hats, steel toe shoes, and a multi-gas monitor.

Summer and winter can be brutal because of the extreme heat and cold and inclement weather conditions such as thunderstorms, heavy snow and very high winds. The plant is in the middle of nowhere (somewhere) and they have to be mindful of fire danger as well. It can be very lonely and stressful as well. When they leave the Control room to make a round, especially at night, it can be a little scary because of all the visual and noise disturbances, such as silver tags on valves illuminated by outside lighting moving around in the wind, or a piece of metal slapping somewhere unknown. And when the outside lighting is at different angles to their body, their own shadow has a way of sneaking up on them. It's not what they can see; it is what they cannot see that alarms them. Sometimes they get this feeling that they are being watched from the distant darkness of the night.

You never know what is going to happen during a shift. It may be just a simple maintenance issue or as major as an unexpected total plant shutdown. The operator on duty is always glad to see some relief in the form of supervision, electrician, instrumentation, mechanical, IT or maybe another operator. If a plant shutdown does occur, it takes two or more operators along with maintenance personnel approximately 12 to 16 hours to bring the plant back up to near full production. Think of sitting in class and trying to focus for twelve hours straight. It is very time consuming, stressful, and tiresome. During the startup the operator is always on the move opening and closing valves and constantly monitoring and adjusting the Digital Control Operating System. Not very often does the plant respond the way it did in previous start-ups. The average 12-hour start-up has been known to take days if weather conditions, equipment failure or operator error persist.

When the plant was new, it took the contractors who built he plant about 6 months to get it lined out, but if not for the hardened experience and knowledge of the Helium Plant Operators, it possibly would have taken longer to prove the new design of the plant. In the beginning it took days to bring the plant back up on line; Operations have managed to somewhat perfect the procedure to equate to approximately twelve-hour average startup. It has been said by operations that most startups are like "pulling a rabbit out of a hat". There are no more rabbits, only experience, stress, and aggravation, and ultimately a job well done.

The Operations staff have proven over time to be a true team of gas plant operating professionals. They are responsible for quality control of products that are used not only nationally but worldwide as well. Operations takes great pride in knowing that products as simple as parade balloon floats are most likely filled with Amarillo Field Office Helium.

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Veteran Helium Plant Operator Curt Robertson (foreground) trains new HPO Tim Coleman at the DCS computers.

HPOs Tim Coleman and Curt Robertson operate the gas feed inlet valve into the plant.